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FM AMEMBASSY DHAKA

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9636

INFO RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 2179

RUEHGO/AMEMBASSY RANGOON PRIORITY 2930

RHHMUNA/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI PRIORITY

RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY

RHHMUNS/COMSOPCPAC HONOLULU HI PRIORITY

RUEAWJA/DEPT OF JUSTICE WASHDC PRIORITY

RUEKDIA/DIA WASHDC PRIORITY

RUCNFB/FBI WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY

RHMFISS/HOMELAND SECURITY CENTER WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY

RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 DHAKA 001024

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR SCA/INSB, SCA/RA, AND S/CT

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/05/2029

TAGS: PGOV PINS PTER PINR KTFN KISL BG

SUBJECT: BANGLADESH ARRESTS FOUNDER OF HUJI-B

REF: DHAKA 1007

Classified By: Ambassador James F. Moriarty. Reasons: 1.4 (b) and (d)

Summary

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**¶1.** (C) Bangladesh authorities arrested Moulana Abdus Salam, the founder of Harkatul Jihad al Islami - Bangladesh (HUJI-B), which is on the Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO) list on November 1. GOB officials said Salam's latest arrest was linked to his alleged role in a 2004 assassination attempt on Sheikh Hasina. Authorities arrested Salam in March 2009 for his alleged role in a 2001 bombing of a political rally, but the courts released him on bail in July 2009. Salam's arrest is the latest concrete demonstration of the GOB's commitment to crack down on extremist groups and terrorist organizations. End Summary.

Police Re-arrest HUJI-B Founder

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**¶2.** (U) Plainclothes detectives detained Moulana Abdus Salam, the founder of HUJI-B, on November 1 for his alleged role in the August 2004 attempted assassination of Sheikh Hasina during a political rally, which left 24 dead and over 300 wounded. Police had arrested him in March 2009 for his alleged involvement in a January 2001 bombing during a Communist Party of Bangladesh rally, but the courts released Salam on bail in July 2009. Police officials said Salam's latest arrest was based upon information they had received from Mufti Hannan, a detained HUJI leader. Hannan allegedly had identified for the police the central leaders of the group that planned and carried out the grenade attack on Sheikh Hasina and those attending the Awami League political rally. (Note: The Government of Bangladesh (GOB) banned HUJI-B in October 2005 in response to a series of violent acts attributed to HUJI-B between 1998 and 2004. Huji-B leaders who remain at large include field commander Manzur Hasan, Dhaka city President Moulana Delwar, Publicity Secretary Mufti Shafiqur Rahman, and Moulana Mufti Abdul Hye. HUJI-B is on the United States Foreign Terrorist Organization List. End Note.)

**¶3.** (C) A well-connected journalist told Embassy staff he believed the real reason for the GOB's detention of Salam was to seek information about who supported his 2007 attempt to establish the Islamic Democratic Party (IDP). The Election Commission refused to register the IDP as a political party,

thereby blocking its participation in the 2008 election. The source said Salam had contact with the Directorate General of Forces Intelligence (DGFI) and had visited DGFI offices while free on bail earlier this year.

Biographic Information

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¶4. (C) According to the journalist, Salam, a graduate from the deobandi madrassa system in India, also attended madrassas in Bangladesh and Pakistan. He joined the war against the Soviet Union in Afghanistan as a Mujahideen unit commander in Khost during the 1980s. Upon his return to Bangladesh in 1989, he established HUJI-B in April 1992, using Afghan War veterans as the core element of HUJI-B members. He also opened a women's madrassa in Sherupur, Bogra, in northern Bangladesh. Both he and his wife taught at this madrassas prior to moving to the Bashundhara residential area, located near the diplomatic zone and U.S. Embassy. The journalist said Salam lived in Pakistan from 1998 to 2003. The journalist described Salam as "courageous" and "straight forward" in his statements. He said, "Unlike the very conservative leaders of Jamiatul Mujahidin Bangladesh (JMB), Salam is somewhat modern in his outlook." Salam has three daughters, including twins born in Pakistan.

Comment

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¶5. (C) Along with the recent decision to ban Hizb-ut-Tahrir-Bangladesh (HTB) (reftel), Salam's arrest

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provides further evidence of the GOB's commitment to crackdown on domestic extremist groups, including groups from the FTO list. Post will continue to analyze GOB CT activities and engage with the GOB as it continues its efforts against HTB, HUJI-B, Laskar-e-Tayyiba, and other extremist groups operating in Bangladesh.

MORIARTY